

## GENITAL WARTS

Genital warts are one of the most common types of sexually transmitted infections. Nearly all sexually active people will become infected with at least one type of human papillomavirus (HPV), the virus that causes genital warts, at some point during their lives.

Genital warts affect the moist tissues of the genital area. They can look like small, flesh-coloured bumps or have a cauliflower-like appearance. In many cases, the warts are too small to be visible.

Some strains of genital HPV can cause genital warts, while others can cause cancer. Vaccines can help protect against certain strains of genital HPV.

### The signs and symptoms of genital warts include:

- Small, flesh-coloured, brown or pink swellings in your genital area
- A cauliflower-like shape caused by several warts close together
- Itching or discomfort in your genital area
- Bleeding with intercourse

Genital warts can be so small and flat as to be invisible. Rarely, however, genital warts can multiply into large clusters, in someone with a suppressed immune system.

The human papillomavirus (HPV) causes warts. There are *more than 40 strains of HPV* that affect the genital area.

Genital warts are almost *always spread through sexual contact*. Your warts don't have to be visible for you to spread the infection to your sexual partner.

### Risk factors

Factors that can increase your risk of becoming infected include:

- Having unprotected sex with multiple partners
- Having had another sexually transmitted infection
- Having sex with a partner whose sexual history you don't know
- Becoming sexually active at a young age
- Having a compromised immune system, such as from HIV or drugs from an organ transplant

### When to see the Dr

Anyone who have genital warts should see a Dr or nurse.

### Prevention

•Limiting your number of sexual partners and being vaccinated will help prevent you from getting genital warts.

•Using a condom every time you have sex is a good idea, but won't necessarily protect you from genital warts.

## Frequently asked questions about Genital Warts.

Q. What are genital warts?

A. Genital warts are a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the Human papillomavirus (HPV). They can occur on the skin around or sometimes inside the penis or external genitals, vagina or internal genitals, anus, and occasionally in the mouth or throat.

Q. Can the genital warts be treated?

A. Genital warts can be treated. They are a common infection in sexually active individuals.

Q. What are the causes of genital warts?

A. You get genital warts through vaginal, oral, and anal sexual contact. This includes both penetrative sex and sexual activities where there is skin-to-skin contact. Once you have genital warts, you can pass them to others even if you don't have symptoms.

Q. What are the symptoms of genital warts?

A. If you have genital warts, it is common to not notice any symptoms. If you do get symptoms, they will most likely show up anytime from a few weeks to many months after sexual contact.

Symptoms are usually painless bumps on your genitals or around your anus. They can also be inside your genitals. Genital warts can be different sizes and shapes, including flat or cauliflower-like in appearance. They are often flesh-coloured but can also be darker than the surrounding skin.

Q. Should I tell my sexual partner if I have genital warts?

A. It is up to you if you want talk to your current sexual partners about warts. Telling your partners helps them make informed choices, but you may not want or feel safe telling your partners. You need to make the decision that is best for you.

Q. What complications can arise from having genital warts?

A. Genital warts don't usually cause other health problems. Even though they are caused by HPV, there is almost no increased risk of developing cancer. You do not need additional cancer screening tests.

Once visible genital warts are gone, there is still a chance they could come back in the future. Serious complications include:

higher chance of getting and passing HIV

warts that are resistant to treatment

Pregnancy: Tell your health care provider if you are pregnant and have genital warts. You can pass the genital warts virus to your child during birth.

Q. Can genital warts be prevented?

The HPV vaccine can help prevent most strains of genital warts and genital cancers. This vaccine is available for people of all genders. The vaccine will not help you get rid of genital warts that you already have, but it can prevent future infections.

It is a good idea to be tested regularly for STIs, especially if you have new sexual partners or open relationships. Talking with partners about safer sex makes sure everyone knows what to expect. Condoms are great if they work for you – the correct use of condoms might reduce your chance of passing and getting genital warts.